

CLOSURE OF CLOVER

THE DECISION of Mr. Michael Collins, General Manager of Clover Meats Ltd., to close down the bacon factory at Milergrave Street, on October 31 because of the refusal of the pork butchers to accept the company's working proposals has caused widespread controversy. This ultimatum marked the most serious stage in the bitter struggle between Collins and the Limerick Pork Butchers Society over recent years.

The current dispute came to a head when the working proposals drawn up by the company and including a new incentive bonus scheme were unacceptable to the 32 butchers in the 'killing' section--even on a six months' trial basis. Out of a total of 342 workers, pork butchers number 120 and almost all the workers are members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. The butchers claim that in 1966 the introduction of incentive bonus resulted in a big reduction in the number of workers employed in the butchers department. They state that the scheme gave an average weekly bonus of £3.45 on top of the basic wage of £12.87. The butchers blame much of the present trouble on the fact that the bonus payments have not kept pace with their wage increases. As a result, the basic pay of a top butcher in the 'killing' section is £21.37 while the bonus has remained at a weekly average of £3.45 instead of rising pro rata to about £6.

The butchers in the 'killing' section rejected another form of incentive scheme on 9 April this year because they believed it did not offer them a fair return. After this the company stepped up the pressure to force the butchers to accept new working proposals of which the rejected bonus scheme formed an important part. On August 13, following a walk-out and demonstration by other ITGWU workers employed at the factory against the refusal of the butchers to accept the package deal, the Society met to consider the proposals. With the much repeated threat of Collins to close the factory hanging over their heads, they unanimously agreed to accept the new deal. It now seems that the butchers only went along with the proposals not because they were satisfied, but to avert the closure of the factory. They obviously hoped to use the breathing space to re-negotiate a better agreement for their members in the 'killing' section.

After this the 'I'll close the factory if I don't get my own way' attitude of Collins helped to further inflame the situation. To express their dissatisfaction with the arrangement the 32 butchers in the 'killing' section went on a 'go-slow'. This action caused Collins

to serve notice that the factory would be finally closed on 31 October.

At a press conference, held on 13 October Collins claimed that 'during disruptions the factory was losing £2000



a week' but failed to furnish any proof in support of this assertion. He then went on to say that the factory had an annual turnover of three to four million pounds.

'The expansion of Clover sales in Limerick has been fantastic by any standards. Since 1966 the sales in products have trebled. We are killing about one hundred thousand pigs per year, and well over two million pounds was paid out to Irish farmers,' he stated. Collins made no effort to detail the butchers' contribution to this 'fantastic sales expansion'.

During the dispute the butchers have been getting a bad 'press' and have been painted as a work-shy, selfish clique. Even the old chestnut relating to their operation of a closed shop that 'a pork butcher can become a Pope but a Pope cannot become a pork butcher' has been dragged out and used to confuse the basic bonus issue.

The butchers are unique in Limerick's working class history for the manner in which industrial militancy and religious devotion are interwoven in their trade unionism. In 1890 they fought a bitter 13 weeks strike which was settled on 15 August through the intervention of Dr. O'Dwyer, the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. After this the butchers annually observed 15 August, the Feast of the Assumption as their own 'Lady's Day' holiday. No work is carried out on this day and a special Mass is celebrated for the Society's members in thanksgiving for the ending of the strike. In 1891 a team of butchers and bricklayers employed by the O'Mara company went to Russia to help establish the bacon industry there. In

continued overleaf

unity by consent

THE MOST HACKNEYED WORDS in Southern Ireland for the last few years must surely be the phrase 'unity by consent.' The leaders of the three main parties hardly ever refer to Northern Ireland without stressing the importance of this approach.

But does this mean then that if Northern Protestants do not give their consent to a United Ireland they will be allowed to opt for the State of their own choosing, and that the Southern Government might finally abandon its absurd and undemocratic claim to the North? Well, of course that's a different matter. It is one thing for Lynch and his like to talk about consent and agreement etc., but at every Ard Fheis Lynch reiterates the traditional Fianna Fail position, that 'there is but one Irish Nation and that the minority had no right to opt out.'

The dishonest and hypocritical attitude of Lynch and his party was shown clearly in an interview which he gave to the

German magazine 'Der Spiegel' and which was published simultaneously in the 'Irish Press' on Monday 23 October.

In the course of the interview Lynch said: 'My aim from the beginning has been, and still is, to bring about a situation where quadripartite talks--that is between representatives of the Westminster and Dublin Governments and the elected leaders of the Northern communities--can usefully take place and which would lead to an acceptable solution ...'

What does Lynch mean when he talks about an acceptable solution? He certainly does not mean the only solution which would be acceptable to the majority in the North, i.e. retaining the link with Britain. Further on in the interview he says, 'the Irish question cannot be resolved satisfactorily through any settlement of convenience or expediency. It must be

continued overleaf

CLOVER

continued from front page
1913 the Limerick pork butchers contributed £10 a week to help the locked-out Dublin workers for the duration of the struggle, and, in all, gave more money to this fund than any other union in Ireland or Britain.

In 1923, when the Limerick bacon factory owners attempted to reduce the wages by 10/- per week, the butchers engaged in another strike against this assault on their living conditions. After thirteen weeks this dispute was settled through the mediation of Fr. Phillip, a Franciscan priest. After this the Society appears to have shifted some of its emphasis from helping other workers to helping the Catholic Church. In the forties the bacon industry was hit by a severe recession and the butchers suffered unemployment and hardship; many emigrated to Britain and others went into the building industry to work as labourers. In the early fifties the Butchers' Society donated £7,000 to St. John's Cathedral for the construction of an altar. On 15 August every year this altar is decorated with flowers by the members. And the butchers continued its tradition of nominating the Catholic bishop of Limerick as Honorary President of the Society.

The butchers' special blend of trade unionism and religion served the bacon factory owners during the country's period of economic protectionism. However, the introduction of free trade, the coming of foreign capital and new working methods and the operation of incentive schemes left the butchers largely unprepared for the transition. While the craft unions were busy dismantling their closed shops and 'father to son' set-ups the butchers were still entrenched behind their traditions, clinging to a form of trade unionism unsuited to the new situation. The exclusive and clannish nature of their society had resulted in their failure to win the full support of their fellow factory workers and has enabled the company to exploit this and 'divide and rule' position. And the basic unfairness of some of the bonus schemes being operated at the factory has caused disagreement within the ranks of the butchers. In a situation where top butchers in the 'killing' section can only earn a basic of £21.37 with an average bonus of £3.45, while other butchers earn more and about ten earn an average of about £50 per week for comparable efforts, it is difficult to preserve a united front.

But the fact that down through the years the butchers have worked in dirty and difficult conditions, in many cases for small wages, has gone unsaid in the present dispute. The manner in which they have been pilloried and threatened with the loss of their employment has also passed without comment. And perhaps the greatest hypocrisy of all is the use of the word 'co-operative' to describe the owner-farmers of Clover Meats. A 'co-operative' where the workers are excluded from decisions concerning their very livelihood is a mockery. This is perhaps one of the reasons why General Manager Collins is so much at home in this undemocratic set-up.

But to expect the public hearing of the Labour Court to do anything about this position is to expect a miracle. And even the Limerick butchers with their long tradition of religious commitment hardly believe in miracles.

unity by consent

continued from front page

dealt with in the context of Ireland as a whole ...'

In other words, Lynch will sit around a table with representatives of Northern Protestants to find an acceptable solution. Acceptable to whom? To Lynch and Fianna Fail, of course, as any solution which does not embody a 'United Ireland' would not be acceptable to Lynch and company. A case of 'Hobson's Choice' for the Protestants, despite all the talk about acceptable solutions.

The reason for all the double talk by Lynch about the North must not be overlooked. Fianna Fail are coming under more and more pressure every day to bring about a democratic settlement of the national conflict. The old slogans will not

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do anymore as more and more people in Southern Ireland are beginning to become aware of the fact that two nations exist.

It is because of this and because a small but growing number of workers are beginning to question the once unquestionable claim that the Southern ruling class has the right to exercise sovereignty over the North, that Lynch now sprinkles his speeches with phrases such as 'two communities', 'different cultures', etc.

It is now up to the working class to bring it a step further and effect a democratic settlement. Our slogan must be: 'Full recognition of the right of the Ulster Protestant nation to remain as part of the State of its own choosing; full recognition of the democratic rights of the Catholic minority in the North, and the Protestant minority in the South.'

CLOSED SHOPS

part three

IRISH TRADE UNIONISTS can learn from the British experience of closed shops. Where working class interests are not the first consideration, inter-union disputes will inevitably occur, leading to a 'divide and rule' situation for the employers and weakening the bargaining position of the workers.

A particularly bitter inter-union dispute took place in Britain in 1954 between the Transport and General Workers and the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers. The clash had its origins in a strike at Hull when the dockers objected to a hand-scuttling method of unloading grain. Their union, the Transport and General Workers, stated that they had broken an agreement and ordered them to return to work. The dockers then left this union and joined the Stevedores and Dockers. The Transport Union claimed that the stevedores had exploited its members' resentment to 'poach' them for their own ranks. The stevedores countered by declaring that the Hull dockers had insisted on transferring to them. Soon large numbers of Transport dockers quit their membership and joined the stevedores. By the end of the year it was estimated that ten thousand Transport dockers at Birkenhead, Liverpool, Manchester and Hull had transferred to the Stevedores.

The Transport Union took the matter to the Disputes Committee of the British Trade Union Congress. The committee found in its favour and the Stevedores were suspended from the TUC pending the return of the new members to their former union. But at this stage the dockers concerned had no intention of allowing anyone to dictate to them as to which union they should belong to. In March 1955 the Merseyside Stevedore men fought and won a two-day strike against the local Dock Labour Board in order to break the Transport's closed shop, which the Board had accepted at the port. In May the Stevedores embarked on a more ambitious and widespread struggle to break the Transport's closed shop monopoly on the provincial port joint committees and to secure representation for their members. The Stevedores' strike lasted forty days but ended in failure.

Later in the year when the Stevedores attempted to return the provincial dockers to the Transport Union, they were prevented from doing so by a Liverpool docker named Francis Spring. An injunction, which was upheld in the High Court in

March 1956, was taken out by Spring to restrain the Stevedores from excluding him from membership. The TUC Disputes Committee then asked the Stevedores to strike off their books all the dockers who had joined their union except for those in the same position as Spring; but the Stevedores refused to accept these terms and were eventually expelled from the TUC in 1959.

Commenting on the dispute in his book, 'A History of British Trade Unionism', Henry Pelling wrote: 'It will be seen that this strike, which like most other strikes involved inconvenience and annoyance to many persons not involved in the quarrel, was discreditable to the trade union movement for two reasons: it was a strike which owed its origin to a demarcation dispute between two rival unions; and it involved the attempt of one union, and that the strongest one, to prevent the workers concerned from belonging to the union of their choice.'

Another closed shop situation in Britain which had certain similarities to current disputes in the Limerick area, was that caused by the maintenance men at the newspaper printing presses. These workers were members of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the Electrical Trades Union and refused to accept the fact that they were unable to negotiate directly with their employers, but had to accept terms negotiated on their behalf by the printing unions. They took strike action in support of their demand for direct negotiation and recognition. While the printing unions made no attempt to force the maintenance workers to join their unions, the dispute was still mainly an inter-union one. The strike began and the newspaper offices closed down. Members of the printing unions were out of work because of their refusal to pass the maintenance men's pickets, and their unions asked the TUC General Council to intervene on their behalf. It was only after the strike had gone on for two weeks, and with the London newspapers entirely halted, that any contact took place between the leaders of the printers' unions and those of the maintenance men's unions. The strike was finally settled when a joint committee of the printing and maintenance unions was formed and came to terms with the Newspapers Proprietors Association. This joint committee approach offers an obvious and fair example to the unions concerned with the Limerick closed shop disputes, if they are prepared to learn from the British experience.

(to be continued)

THE BALLYGOMBEEN MAN

A NEW PLAY, 'The Ballygombeen Bequest', by John Arden and his wife, Margaretta D'Arcy was presented recently at the Shepherds Bush Theatre Club in London. The play has been described as an 'Anglo-Irish melodrama' and it deals with an attempted eviction at Oughterard, Co. Galway. Arden whose first play was performed in 1957-58, and is considered to be one of Britain's leading dramatists. He has also become known for his political activities and is a long-time Marxist.

People entering the Bush Theatre were greeted by a barrage of newspaper cuttings and background information about Ireland's past. Blasts of the modern Republican ballad, 'The Men Behind The Wire', provided the background music, calculated to put the audience in the right mood for the play.

What followed during the course of the evening was another view of the Oughterard saga, dressed up in song and verse. The action centred around the small cottage by the shore of Lough Corrib. For fifteen years the cottage has been the home of the Fahys. The property was inherited by a retired commander named Burgess, who now operates as a Sussex estate agent. Burgess apparently used an adjoining bungalow to entertain paying guests while he himself lived in Chichester.

In 1954 he obtained Bartle Fahy's signature on a caretaker's agreement. Fahy did not know that within a year the property could have reverted to his family

under the existing squatters' rights law. In signing the caretaker's agreement it is claimed that he unwittingly lost the possibility of owning his own house. It is alleged that Fahy was drunk when he signed his name, though his signature is bold and clear. When Bartle Fahy died his wife Nora and daughter Brid continued to live in the cottage. After this Burgess started to press for the eviction of the remaining two members of the Fahys. Their offer to buy the cottage was refused, and they were offered £1,000 compensation if they left. This offer was refused as the Fahys claimed to have spent £3,000 on repairs. Court case decisions found in favour of Burgess.

Because of the death of Nora Fahy the eviction order, due to be enforced on 13 September, has been extended to January next year. In Galway the case has been the centre of some agitation by Sinn Fein (official) members. Demonstrations on behalf of the Fahys culminated in a confrontation outside the Galway court house during the hearing of the final appeal. Sinn Fein members spat on and chased the elderly landlord as he left the court house. The police intervened to protect Burgess and he was taken away in their car.

Sinn Fein has attempted to focus public attention on the landlords, English, foreign and absentee, with property and land in the Co. Galway area. It has also opposed the construction of a large golf course and other developments on the shore of Lough Corrib. The disputed cottage stands in an area where many people believe

the proposed further development would take place if the land became available. With Ireland's entry to the EEC and the relative low prices of land here, it is clear that the authors of the play make a strong point in suggesting that the area around Oughterard could be developed into a playground for the entertainment of wealthy Europeans.

This theme is certainly a valid one for a playwright but John Arden is more than just a playwright. As a Marxist his attitude to all land and landowners should be clear. But it is obvious that Arden's flirtation with Sinn Fein (official) has not helped his Marxism.

In a letter to the short-lived left-wing paper 'Seven Days', of 23/29 February this year Arden wrote:

'I have been asked to inform you that at the monthly meeting of Galway Regional Executive (Comhairle Ceannairt) of the Official Republican Movement (Sinn Fein) held on Sunday, 13 February a resolution was passed declaring support for the coal-miners strike in Britain and the following letter was sent to the National Union of Mineworkers:

'We send our fraternal greetings and solidarity and we support the strike at present carried out by you, the British coal-miners, against the Tory Government at Westminster. The Government has already used troops to savagely repress the minority in Northern Ireland: and now that it has taken emergency powers to deal with the coal strike, we recognise that similar measures are in contemplation against you. We feel that our struggle to defeat British imperialism, international capitalism and the native Irish capitalism is the same as your struggle. We are determined to oppose any attempt to bring coal into the port of Galway for the purpose of getting it across the Border into Northern Ireland and breaking the strike. In token of our solidarity we have agreed to donate the sum of £25 to your fund.' 'I hope that this gesture by Irish Republicans will be appreciated in Britain and that it will be understood that, despite the distorted and often flatly untrue reports in many British newspapers, feeling in this is directed against the Heath administration and not against the British working class. I wish those members of the British working class who have been compelled by economic pressure to join the army could also understand this.'

It was unfortunate for Arden and Sinn Fein that the publication of this letter coincided with the Aldershot bomb attack which took place on Monday afternoon, February 28. Seven unarmed people, six working class women and a priest were blown to bits by the IRA (official) explosion. And the civilians 'those members of the British working class who had been compelled by economic pressure' to work for the British Army could not now understand Arden's letter. The miners were also unimpressed.

After this little more was heard of Arden and he appears to have spent his time in polishing off 'The Ballygombeen Bequest'. The 'socialism' and gombeen nationalism of Sinn Fein have done nothing to further Arden's left-wing ideology. He is yet another confused victim of this potent anti-working class mixture.

O'BRIEN'S CHALLENGE

THE MOST DRAMATIC development in Southern politics since the founding of the state has been the challenge by Conor Cruise O'Brien to traditional anti-partitionist thinking. O'Brien is currently the spokesman of the Irish Labour Party on Northern Ireland affairs.

O'Brien's main assertion is that to promote the idea of Irish unity as the only solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland (at a time when the Ulster Protestant community is bitterly opposed to it) is 'not only futile but actually mischievous' and will result in a war between the two communities in Ireland. He still retains 'Irish unity' as a political objective, but he is committed unequivocally to unity by the free consent of the Ulster Protestants--in fact, he is merely taking seriously the 'unity by consent' formula which is constantly repeated by other Southern politicians and, of course, the SDLP. However, putting forward this democratic attitude towards Northern Protestants has been met with squeals of rage from Catholic nationalist quarters and, in particular, from the SDLP--which just shows how seriously they take the notion of 'unity of consent.'

Catholic nationalists have spent a great deal of time and trouble attempting to

promote their claims to rule over Northern Ireland. Now, a politician from the Catholic community in Ireland, who is widely known internationally, presents a simple but irrefutable case that their claim is unjust and that its assertion at this time is merely exacerbating the situation. The 'defection' of Conor Cruise O'Brien to democratic politics is of immense significance both on the home front and internationally.

O'Brien has not adopted the W.A. view that there are two nations in Ireland. However, he points out in his book 'States of Ireland' that 'the distinct communities indicated by the terms Catholic and Protestant are the prime realities of the situation' and clearly sees the future in terms of two reformed states in Ireland, recognising each other's right to self-determination and co-operating on matters of mutual interest. Such a policy is unquestionably a democratic one. If Conor Cruise O'Brien maintains that policy in the face of the strident Catholic nationalist opposition and manages to get that policy wholeheartedly accepted by the Irish Labour Party, it will have considerable influence on the settlement of the national question.

--Reprinted from the 'Two Nations'.

THE THALIDOMIDE STORY

john boyle

part one

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM which follows up from week to week a particular issue or grievance until some action is taken which can be said to derive from the journalistic exposure is rare enough in capitalist society. It should be quite clear that this by no means refers to the type of sensationalistic expose type of journalism which has in the past been largely associated with certain 'popular' British Sunday newspapers.

The essential difference is the frequency with which a topic is treated. The sensationalistic-oriented journalist or newspaper will take up an issue, splash banner headlines all across its front page, and that's the last that will be heard of it. Increasingly this has been the tendency with the new-look, dynamic, go-ahead, etc. 'Sunday Independent'.

The main distinguishing feature of this type of thing is that its essential purpose is to serve the profitability potential of the newspaper, however much it may pose as the champion of liberty, the defender of the people, and so on. Evidently the policy pursued by the 'Independent' has yielded the appropriate 'dividends' (profits £1 million in the recent year available).

Evidence of the depths to which the sensationalist will sink was the lead story in the 'Sunday Independent' of 15/10/72. This was a piece by Business Editor, Colm Rapple, expressing horror at the fact that since the beginning of the year speculators in the stocks and shares market in Ireland had made a cool £2,000,000, tax-free of course.

The story derived from a speech given by the Governor of the Central Bank, Dr. T. K. Whitaker made at the Third Irish Investment Conference, organised by the 'Irish Times', on-note the date--October 4th, and reported widely in the newspapers on the following day. It was paraded as 'news' in the 'Sunday Independent' ten days later. The absence of a capital gains tax in this country is the sole reason why property speculation, mergers, takeovers, and the procedure now known as 'asset-stripping' (a company whose market valuation is low in relation to its real assets is taken over, and its assets sold off for hard cash) are on an ever-increasing spiral, and are actively assisting, indeed generating, the sky-rocketing inflation, the effects of which are being increasingly felt by every wage-earner in the country.

Both Dr. Whitaker and the 'Sunday Independent' know this, and it is sheer

hypocrisy to divorce the features which derive from an imperialist market set-up from that basic economic system and to express horror and shock in a pious show of concern for the wider society at trends which cannot be reversed without a fundamental structural upheaval in the economic relations of society.

Before returning to the 'Sunday Independent' an attempt must be made to define the precise area one has to exclude the sort of personal idiosyncratic column (e.g., Frank Ward's in the 'Sunday Press'), which returns to the same topics from time to time, but in fact merely parades personal prejudices, which at best are harmless and at the worst are representative of the worst type of populist drivel.

Very few examples of what could be called continuing investigative journalism come to mind. One attempt which does is that carried out by Dick Grogan well over a year ago in 'This Week' magazine in regard to the criminal incarceration of a young Dublin Maoist, Martin Dolphin, in the Central Mental Hospital, Dundrum. The persistent embarrassing publicity here doubtless had some influence in persuading Minister O'Malley, to unlock the gates in this case.

This example in itself serves to meet the objection that most Irish publishers would make against this type of journalism--that it, that it stretches their resources--both financial and personnel--to mount an in-depth running story of this nature. No such thing: it merely demands that a journalist be given his head and allowed follow a story wherever it may lead.

The real objection is strictly economical. It would not be good policy (i.e. advertising and sales would suffer) if we were to follow up stories in this fashion. That is to say, people would be bored by the degree of recapitulation involved, the advertisers wouldn't like it and the profits would suffer. That at any rate is how the argument goes. The real failure is one of courage--a peculiarly Irish characteristic, and one which is very much in evidence in all the national newspapers' treatment of the North at the present time.

In England the 'Sunday Times' has established itself in the investigative field by virtue of its tremendous financial resources which enable the paper to probe the major developments of the week with a greater degree of thoroughness than its rivals.

By and large it confines itself to current affairs material, but occasionally--as in the current Thalidomide series--it takes up a less than immediately popular issue, and follows it through. It would not be entirely inaccurate, to suggest that the paper might have sounded out higher political and legal opinion prior to commencing on the series, and having assured themselves of support in the appropriate circles of power, proceeded to launch what in fact is turning into a protracted struggle with the British agents of the disaster drug, Distillers Biochemicals.

Such considerations ought not to be ignored--the motive of self-interest is not solely the property of the gutter press--but nonetheless it does not invalidate the public service that is clearly being met in this case. An analysis however of

the Thalidomide affair which concentrates on the emotional shock appeal--which, while possibly of great comfort to those who have to live with the problem--is less than adequate, and does not give its audience the opportunity to appreciate fully the springs of the tragedy, and furthermore glosses over some salient facts regarding the operations of companies functioning in a capitalist market-oriented economy--all companies, of course, not just those of the pharmaceutical field--which in essence make them anti-social and potentially harmful in whatever field they specialise.

The following is a history of the marketing of the thalidomide drug and the terrible consequences that derived therefrom. The facts are taken from a Penguin Special, 'Thalidomide and the Power of the Drug Companies' (price 40p), and from the 'Sunday Times' (issues Sept. 24, 1972--to date).

Thalidomide was released originally in West Germany, officially in October 1957, though in fact it had already been marketed on a trial basis at the beginning of November 1956 in the Hamburg area. It was described initially not as a sedative (which was its later alleged function) but as a treatment for respiratory infections! The company responsible was Chemie Grunenthal, one of the bright stars of the West German economic miracle following upon the defeat of the Nazis.

By 1958 it was an international undertaking and it was sold by licencees

'I have a son aged ten who is the only thalidomide survivor with major internal abnormalities. I took him home when he was six weeks old and was deteriorating. I decided that I was not going to let my child die and that I would do all the nursing and feeding. Up to date my son has had 42 operations on his body. He has only one kidney now. He still has no control of his rectum which means he always has dirty pants. He has an abnormality of the penis and may be sterile. He also has only got sight up to eye level and when he looks up he is not able to focus centre but doubles up, which means he sees two of everything.'

--Edited extracts from a letter by Mrs. Julie Pope to 'Sunday Times', 1/10/72.

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'Since the mortality rate of thalidomide children is around 40%, the original number (affected) has been considerably reduced. The life expectation of the severe cases still alive is expected to be low, one factor being the extreme sensitivity to high temperature, due to the absence of extremities playing their important role in the regulation of the body temperature.'

--'Thalidomide and the Power of the Drug Companies'. p. 32.

in eleven European, seven African, seventeen Asiatic and eleven countries in the western Hemisphere. As in Ireland, the thalidomide-containing drugs were sold in West Germany without prescription (over the counter), in Britain this is not allowed.

It was not long before the first reports of toxic effects began to filter in. At this stage the main complaints were of nerve damage in adults. The progress was as follows: After use of thalidomide for even a short time a prickling feeling in the extremities was followed by a sensation of numbness. The numbness begins in the toes, and spreads upwards. Months later again numbness begins in the tips of the fingers.

After some time the complete picture of a toxic polyneuritis develops, including severe muscular pains and cramps in the extremities, weakness of the limbs, and disturbances of the reflexes and co-ordination. In its fully developed form partial paralysis may occur.

This was the picture that had begun to emerge in the early months of 1960. What was the reaction of the company? Well, with thalidomide sales representing 46% of the total turnover of Chemie Grunenthal, what would you expect. Dealing with the problem in April of that year, Dr. Neinrich Muckter, director of the scientific department is on record as writing:

'Unfortunately we are now receiving in increasing numbers reports on the side-effects of this drug, as well as letters

'My happy laughter and appropriate references to the completely harmless properties of the drug were apparently successful in putting the often anxious pharmacists' minds at rest.'

--A salesman for Chemie Grunenthal explaining how it was done.

'Thalidomide and the Power of the Drug Companies'. p. 61-2.



'Frederick Astbury ... has no arms or legs and no right hip. His feet, which are turned inwards, are growing and gradually pushing into his stomach ... Mr. Astbury left home two years ago and the family now live on social security. Like many other thalidomide mothers Mrs. Astbury has developed severe back problems. Fred now weighs more than eight stone and needs a great deal of assistance.'

'Mrs. Astbury can no longer lift him properly. She half pulls, half pushes him along the floor, holding onto his three fingers and pushing her knee into his stomach. Fred's artificial legs weigh more than 12lb. and are extremely uncomfortable. He rarely wears them for more than an hour and takes them off to play soccer at school, heading the ball and rolling around the field ... He now does everything with his mouth, including writing, painting and even woodwork.'

--Edited extracts from a case history recounted in the 'Sunday Times', 15/10/72.

from doctors and pharmacists who want to put Contergan (trade name) on prescription. From our side, 'everything' (my emphasis) must be done to avoid prescription enforcement, since already a substantial amount of our turnover comes from over-the-counter sales.'

This was not an idle threat: this became company policy. The demands of the market had to be satisfied. Nothing was beneath the dignity of the company in pursuing their policy. Doctors known to be critical were visited and abused regarding their competence, salesmen were advised to 'create confusion' in the minds of those who were potentially hostile, and to dissuade physicians who were contemplating publishing critical articles about thalidomide. Why, even a private detective was hired to assemble 'facts' about those who were critical of the company's product. This man, of course, proved himself more than capable of ferreting out any hints of left-wing allegiances and so on. The company even stooped so low as to place a woman, allegedly suffering from Contergan polyneuritis, into the care of one of the doctors hostile to the company in an attempt to provoke unethical behaviour which might be used against him.

Despite these and many other delaying tactics, the sheer widespread havoc produced by the drug forced the company to accede to having thalidomide placed under prescription in August 1960. But they battled on in support of their produce until the first hints of the real basis of the thalidomide scare began to be made public--the birth of deformed children to mothers who had taken thalidomide during the early stages of pregnancy.

The knowledge of these horror births were made known to the company privately by several doctors anxious to avoid a major medical scandal in the hope that the company would withdraw the drug before the entire pharmaceutical industry would be thrown into disrepute. But even this did not stir Chemie Grunenthal. It was not until November 26th, 1970, upon the publication of an article in a German newspaper, 'Welt Am Sonntag', under the headline 'Malformations from Tablets--Alarming Suspicion of Physician against World-wide Distributed Drug' that the company retreated from its bizarre, anti-human position.

Even the withdrawal was carried out grudgingly. On the day following the appearance of the decisive newspaper article Chemie Grunenthal wrote to the Drug Commission of the German Medical Association: 'Because press reports have undermined the basis of the scientific discussion, we have decided to withdraw Contergan from the market immediately.'

It was as if the company felt hurt that it was no longer free to use human guinea pigs as a testing medium for their largely untested drug. The inadequacy of the company's pharmacological department was attested by no less an authority than the previously mentioned Dr Muckter who in June 1959 pointed out that the department was 'without a qualified leader', and further stressed that other enterprises of a similar size employed three to five times as many pharmacists.

This is an outline of developments in the country where thalidomide originated.

Maria

McGuire

Maria McGuire in her 'Observer' revelations of 3rd and 10th September claims that the Republican movement has been led astray, that the bombing is now senseless, that Sean MacStiofain--a 'sectarian murderer'--has usurped the power of the Army Council, and is, in fact, a dictator. She then goes on to say that the movement is all right, that its aims are valid and are embraced by many fine people. In a nutshell, she's saying that the Provos' aims are all right but their methods are wrong.

But the point is that the Provos' aims, followed to their logical end, leave no other choice than to adopt the tactics they have adopted. The kernel of the opposition to the realization of their aims is not the British Government, though for propaganda purposes they sometimes like to present it as such, but the Ulster Protestants. Once this is accepted the means used to force them into the 'shining, bright Republic' may vary--but they will inevitably reach the stage of an open terror campaign to break Protestant resistance. That is the fact of the matter.

Since the inception of the Northern Ireland state the Southern ruling class has been inculcating the Catholic people in Ireland with the blind belief that it is their national duty to bring down the Northern Ireland state: to get back the 'lost' six counties.

It is undoubtedly true that the Northern Unionists gave up their early attempts to win over Northern Catholics, and that the existence of discrimination against the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland provided the springboard for the current campaign.

Nevertheless the young men in the rank and file of the Provisional IRA are not motivated by a burning desire for Civil Rights: they are deluded by a blind faith in the 'Irish Nation, One and Indivisible'.

To quote from a recent Nationalist Party statement ('Irish Times' 6 September):

'The present terrible violence is not about internment, house searches, 'no-go' areas and the other symptoms. It is about the root wrong of British presence in Ireland and their claim to jurisdiction over six Irish counties'. (If they were honest they would say 'Protestant presence'.)

To castigate the Provos as 'monsters' and 'diabolical fiends' is meaningless name-calling--they are the logical result of decades of Catholic nationalist brain-washing. All nationalism produced its 'monsters' and 'diabolical fiends' when it needs them--in time of war.

For Maria McGuire to reject the methods of the Provos while still supporting their aims--while still owing allegiance to the idea of the 'Irish Nation, One and Indivisible'--is just dishonesty.

The only logical alternative to the Provos is to recognise that there are two nations in Ireland--and to accord each the right to self-determination.

--Reprinted from the 'Two Nations.'

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THE DECISION TO PARTLY resume work on April 26 was followed a few days later by a general calling-off of the strike. The strike ended but the friction which had arisen between members of the local strike committee and the executive of the Irish Trade Union Congress did not cease. A carefully-edited account of the soviet was prepared by the executive and included in the report of the twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress, held at Drogheda on 4-9 August, 1919. The report failed to give any indication of the underlying tensions between the national and local bodies. It stated:

'On Monday, April 14, there began in Limerick city a strike protest against military tyranny which, because of its dramatic suddenness, its completeness and the proof it offered that workers control signifies perfect order, excited world-wide attention.'

Your committee were informed by telegram that a general strike had occurred as a protest against the 'military permit' system. The causes which led to the drastic action were as follows:

A local volunteer named Byrne had been shot during the course of the conflict between the police and a body of volunteers who had attempted to remove him from the hospital. The police who held watch over Byrne had resisted the volunteers, though it was stated at the inquest on behalf of the relatives that Byrne was not legally a prisoner.

At the funeral, which was attended by great numbers of sympathisers, British troops lined the roads with bayonets fixed, armoured cars passed the procession to and fro, aeroplanes hovered over the hearse, 'the show of the tushes of power' being obtruded in a most provocative manner.

Notwithstanding all this the people declined to be provoked into violent action.

Thereupon followed the proclamation of Limerick city as a special military area under the defence of the realm act. In defining the boundaries across which no passage in or out would be allowed without special written permission of the military authorities the city had been cut in two—the river Shannon was made one of the boundaries notwithstanding that the city covers both banks of the river, including Thomondgate. On the Thomondgate side lies Cleeves Condensed Milk and Butter factory and a distillery, besides several smaller undertakings where in all a large number of the workers are employed. The effect of the proclamation therefore was to compel all those Thomondgate workers whose homes are on the south side of the Shannon to obtain a military permit to proceed to and from their work and to undergo examination at the bridge four times a day by military sentries attended by policemen. Similarly all those workers who lived in Thomondgate but whose employment was on the south side, or who desired to go to the centre of the city for shopping or any other purpose, were required to undergo a military and police scrutiny.

With the prospect that such conditions were to come into operation on the Tuesday morning hurried meetings of the Trades Council were held on Sunday, and it was decided late on Sunday night to call on the whole of the workers of the city to cease work on Monday morning as the most effective form of protest available to them as trade unionists.

Their action was supported by the public

suggestion that the national executive sought at any time to supersede the strike committee.

The national executive met at short notice in Dublin and discussed very fully the report received from Mr. Johnson. They also heard a deputation of railwaymen from Limerick and Inchicore and discussed the situation as it affected the railways.

They afterwards held meetings at Limerick and conferred with the strike committee upon the situation. Various proposals were discussed, and it was finally decided unanimously by the strike committee on the tenth day of the strike to call upon all who could resume work without the necessity of applying for permits to do so, and those whose daily occupation required them to procure permits to continue in their refusal to accept this sign of subjugation and slavery pending a decision of a special Trade Union Congress to be called immediately.

A further decision a couple of days later led to a general resumption of work, and a telegram was received from Mr. Cronin, Chairman of the Strike Committee, announcing this fact and stating that the committee decided that the holding of a special congress should be abandoned.

An appeal was made by the Strike Committee for funds, but unfortunately the machinery for raising funds of this kind is too slow to meet urgent needs. Seven or eight thousand pounds per week were needed. Not more than fifteen hundred pounds of cash had come to hand at the end of the second week.

Within a week after resumption of work the military ban was lifted.

The fight made by the working men and women of Limerick brought glory and honour to the working class. They made a spirited protest at a great sacrifice, and we believe that their fight saved other cities and towns from a similar tyranny.

Notwithstanding the lying boast of the Chief Secretary (Ian Macpherson) at Belfast, the Government was compelled to revise its programme of repression.

All the honours of the struggle are with the Limerick workers! (to be continued)

THE LIMERICK SOVIET

by jim kemmy

part 8

in general, even the Chamber of Commerce showing sympathy.

The strike continued from day to day exciting great attention from the press. Several representatives of the American newspapers were in the city awaiting news of the first Atlantic aeroplane flight which it was intended should start from a spot a few miles from the city. These newspaper men made the most of the occasion and in the absence of the flying news wrote up every incident connected with the strike for the edification of the world.

The effectiveness of the control and thorough organisation of the city by the strike committee was acknowledged by all. No work was done except by permission of the committee. Shops were allowed to open for stated periods—scales of prices were fixed—food supplies were organised in the county and in the city; the city was policed by the strike patrols.

In the absence of any information except as such could be gleaned from the news papers, your committee instructed Mr. Johnson to proceed to Limerick on Wednesday afternoon to enquire as to the position and report and to assist in every way possible the local committee. This he did, and the strike committee have in very generous terms recorded their appreciation of the help he was able to give.

There is no basis for the newspapers'

'CLUCKER'

HE HAS SAD EYES and a slow smile. Not that he has much to smile about ... but then who cares ... he's only a messenger. Martin Cluxton had few opportunities in life and who could blame him when he ran to rob a shop ... the odds were against him and anyway he was from a Corporation housing scheme.

Once in a while the glass-house liberals of RTE can look with sharp eyes on a 'difficult' subject. They have even begun to probe the savage environment which has destroyed a thousand Martin Cluxtons ... and continues to destroy. The film-makers win international prizes but this does not change the life of real-day Martin Cluxtons. Our reformatories churn them out, and the words of the Christian Brothers: 'God made a beautiful world,' offer a poor solution.

Martin Cluxton came back to RTE screens recently and moped his way through the simulated slice of Dublin working class life. He may have even jogged the conscience of a few do-gooders and provoked comments of 'Tis true...you know', but then the film fades and all traces of concern are quickly deafened by

the beautiful Coca-Cola world.

One scene in the film clearly showed the true class position of the liberals who made it. It took place in a pub between the Maoist and the demoralised father when all the clichés in the book poured from the mouth of the 'radical', vainly trying to convert the pint-drinking worker. It was typical of liberal formula: make the workers look sincere but stupid and here the design was admirably executed.

However, in spite of its shortcomings, 'Martin Cluxton' did give some insights into how the working class is oppressed in its working and living conditions.

But where there's working class life there's hope. The oppressors, the ruling class, have a long history behind them, whereas 'Clucker's' class is only beginning to come into its own.

*

quote

'... The socialist of another country is a fellow patriot, as the capitalist of my own country is a natural enemy.'

the root of the Irish problem

by KEVIN O'CONNOR

'NEWS AT TEN' reports on a nationwide search. Reports from our Midlands correspondent suggest that the Root lies buried deep in the Bog of Allen and has so far resisted all attempts to dig it up.

Reports that Bord na Mona were employing an advanced design harvester on secret excavation work were denied today by a spokesman for the Irish Sugar Company who manufacture such equipment. Further, said the spokesman, as they mainly deal with sugar-producing crops, he doubted whether the Root would yield much in the line of sweetness.

As news of the search for the Root of the

problem spread, the Irish Dental Association stated that since the Crown of Ireland had long since disappeared, the uncovering of the Root would require some delicate surgery--a problem complicated by the speculation that the Root had two prongs, namely nationalism and religion. The dental spokesman declined to state which of the two prongs was likely to offer the greatest resistance to extractions.

A joint working party from the Catholic diocese of Dublin and the Protestant society of Armagh has been set up to help with identification of the religious prong of the Root ... and an offer has been

received from Mr. Denis Faul and John D. Sheridan, to ensure that the womb lining of the bog is not damaged in the process.

Offers to help with identification of the expected Nationalist prong of the Root have been received from the following: Mr. Kevin Boland, Mr. Sean MacStiofain, Mr. Conor Cruise O'Brien and the full complement of Dail Eireann. None, however, were in agreement as to the precise shade of colouring on the Root. Sinn Fein and (Provo) forwarded a shade of vivid green (with flecks of blood red) while Mr. Cruise O'Brien suggested the Root may have an orange and green hue.

Indeed, in the search for the Root of the Anglo-Irish problem considerable problems of identification arise. For instance, its likely substance, as well as its likely age. How old, in fact, is the Root? Some suggest at least 2000 years, while others put origins as far back as 1690, or as recently as 1916. Mr. Joe Foyle, Professor of Communications at the University of Maynooth, during a race meeting at the Curragh, says that in fact the Root of the Anglo-Irish problem is comparatively recent and originated on television screens during 1968. Indeed, the Root of the Irish problem could even be buried under your living room. The search goes on ...

connolly

'Do we find fault with the employer for following his own interests? We do not. But neither are we under any illusion as to his motives. In the same manner we take our stand with our own class, nakedly, upon our own class interests, but believing that these interests are the highest interests of the race.'

--'Workers' Republic', 18/12/1915.

'We are told that the English people contributed their help to our enslavement. It is true. It is also true that the Irish people duly contributed soldiers to crush every democratic movement of the English people: slaves themselves, the English people helped to enslave others; slaves themselves, the Irish people helped to enslave others. For us and ours the path is clear. The first duty of the working class of the world is to settle accounts with the master class of the world--that of their own country at the head of the list.'

--'Irish Worker', November 29, 1913.

Thoughts on Mission Sunday

unanimous chord of disapproval ...'

'One of the weaknesses of the Roman Catholic missions in the past was that they had been highly professional affairs, mainly of interest to the religious orders, and in very large measure dependent on the favour and financial support of the rulers.'

'The South Pacific ... was one of the first, and numerically one of the most successful, of the fields of Protestant missionary work. The Roman Catholics entered comparatively late; and, inevitably, in a great many cases their work consisted not of preaching the gospel to the heathen but of attempting to detach baptised Christians from the Churches to which they belonged ...'

'Here (Tahiti and Samoa and Fiji) the arrival of the Roman Catholics could mean nothing but rivalry, contention, and strain, and the humiliating display of Christian divisions before the eyes of simple and primitive peoples. And the Polynesians and Micronesians are not so stupid as not to see the advantages of being able to play off one mission against another. Even the tiny atolls of the Gilbert and Ellice isles, which had been thoroughly evangelised by the LMS were not spared; these too had to have their Roman Catholic mission ...'

'Paternalism was perhaps the greatest weakness of all the missionary work in the nineteenth century. It asked the direct question what they were aiming at, missionaries both Protestant and Roman Catholic would have replied that they were building an African Church which in time would be able to stand on its own feet and to do without the help of missionaries; but this was regarded as belonging to so distant a future as not to come within the sphere of practical politics, and few missionaries were consciously or deliberately planning for a different state of affairs in which their own services would be no longer necessary ...'

'The association of the missions (in China, in the Belgian Congo, and elsewhere) with Western governments was certainly far closer than was wise or right. There was hardly a trace of ecumenical understanding or co-operation ... Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries could live for years in the same town and never exchange a word. It was taken for granted by the majority of Roman Catholics that the Protestants were the enemy. This attitude was succinctly set forth in a directive alleged to have been issued from the propaganda in the early days of the Congo missions: 'The heretics are to be followed up and their efforts harassed and destroyed.' And the student is again and again amazed at the westernness of the missions. Almost everywhere it seems to be taken for granted that the missionary period will go on for ever; the duty of the convert is clear--to trust in the superior wisdom of the white man and so to be conveyed without too much trouble in the safe bark of holy Church to the Everlasting Kingdom in Heaven.' ('A History of Christian Missions' by Stephen Neill.)

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THE ECONOMIC BASIS OF APARTHEID

THERE ARE IN EXISTENCE a number of organisations who aims are sufficiently broad and liberal that they attract members of all political shades.

One of the most widely known of these organisations is probably the anti-Apartheid movement. The main activity of this organisation appears to be directed towards ensuring that the public are kept well informed about some of the evils of apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia by means of a regular stream of letters to the 'Irish Times'.

The biggest effort of the movement to date was the massive demonstration it organised against the South African rugby team when it visited Ireland in 1969. Indeed, one can still picture the martyred face of the capitalist economist, Patrick Lynch (then chairman of the Irish anti-Apartheid movement as well as of Aer Lingus) as he led the demonstration.

Lynch and many other members of the anti-Apartheid movement regularly condemn apartheid, pointing out such injustices as the Immorality Act, which forbids sexual relations between whites and blacks, and the fact that marriages are frequently broken up when one of the partners is re-classified as being coloured subsequent to the marriage, etc. These and the many other injustices cited by the movement certainly give example of the cruel and inhuman nature of apartheid.

However, we seldom hear how apartheid serves the South African ruling class in the exploitation of South African workers. (Maybe this is because some of the members of the anti-apartheid movement are not above a bit of exploitation themselves).

It becomes obvious to anybody looking at apartheid in South Africa that its main basis is an economic one. Unlike white workers, all blacks are denied the right

to strike, thus ensuring that there is a large labour force available to work for wages decided solely by the employers. The largest and most profitable industry in South Africa is mining, and it is here that one really discovers how profitable apartheid is for employers.

At West Driefontein, South Africa's largest mine, the wage bill last year for 1,566 white workers came to £4.5 million, an average of £55 per week. At the same mine last year 15,830 black workers were paid £2.6 million, an average of £3.25 per week. In other words you can hire seventeen black miners for the price of one white miner. Free State Geduld, a smaller mine than West Driefontein, recently announced profits off £16 million for last year and its estimated profit for this year is £24 million. The annual wages bill for the black miners was £2 million.

The economic basis of apartheid was further underlined in an article titled 'Only here for De Beers', in 'The Observer' of 17 September. Dealing with the accuracy of the economic forecast of a financial advisor, Teddy Butler-Henderson, the article stated: 'Where Butler-Henderson has scored is with his nap share selection, De Beers Consolidated Mines. The deferred shares were only 24p when he gave us the nod, and they are now 70% higher at 41p. Butler-Henderson is confident of even better things from De Beers. I was looking for a price in the region of 380-400p even before we had the added kicker in June for South African shares provided by the floating of the £, he says. 'I now feel that there is another 25% left in the shares ...'

Could there be a better reason for apartheid?

IN HIS TRUE COLOURS

'OF COURSE, one cannot condone the activities of the Provisionals, but ... I think it is true their long-term objective is a united Ireland.'

Guess who? No, it's not Tomán MacGiolla admitting that there might perhaps be something in common between the 'Marxist Republicans' and their 'Christian Democrat Socialist' brothers. It's none other than that man of moderation, good sense and restraint--our leader, Jack Lynch. The quote comes from a documentary film made by a French director, Marcel Ophuls, on the North of Ireland entitled 'A Sense of Loss'.

So the truth is out. The Provos are of course bad boys, but after all they are getting the fighting done, and basically indeed we all agree on objectives.

It's a pretty shrewd position, further evidence of the consummate political skill of Fianna Fail's leader of course, though if you care to be somewhat moralistic, you might consider the government attitude as hypocritical. But then straight talking has never been a too conspicuous feature of the dealings of the representatives of Catholic nationalism.

With Protestant spokesman such as Craig, at least you know where you stand, but perhaps Honest Jack needs the company of French firm-makers before he bares his soul regarding his ultimate political objectives.

COUNCIL COMMENTARY

LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL has been shocked by the surprise announcement from a leading publisher that it is intended to publish a book by Miss Babs Shanahan, the Mayor's Secretary, who has had extensive journalistic experience over the years writing the official Mayoral speeches.

'It will be titled "Inside City Hall" and

will expose the hypocrisy, and double-dealing of the City councillors,' said a publisher's statement.

Reaction to the news has been swift and an emergency meeting of the Council was held to discuss the matter. RTE sent along a film crew but they were refused admission to the Chamber which indicated the seriousness with which the shock news was being treated.

Ald. Pat Kennedy, quick off the mark, hired a Dublin-based Public Relations firm to promote his image as a saintly and highly moral young man.

'That's a load of cock and bull,' declared Ald. Mick Lipper, 'I could tell you things about him ... What about the time in the tent at Piassey when the dolly bird broke her bra ...'

'Don't mention it,' yelled the Mayor, Councillor Paddy Kiely, 'at five shagging quid a time ... and they fed us with all that French stuff with the quare names ...' and he started to mutter to himself while the City Manager patted him paternally on the head.

'Don't upset yourself Paddy ... here's a black jack for you ...' said the Manager.

Ald. Steve Coughlan, T.D. jumped to his feet. 'We're making a mountain out of a molehill ... 'tis all airy fairy ... Babs would never stab us in the back,' he said. 'I know my friends.'

'How many times did you stab friends in the back,' asked Councillor Jack Bourke, who added: 'I personally welcome this new book as a milestone in Limerick culture and I hope to present a dramatisation of it at the City Theatre.'

Shouts of 'traitor' and 'The Blow-in from the Coombe' disrupted the meeting but the City Manager quickly quelled the uproar when he said: 'Take it easy boys ... you have nothing to worry about ... I have read the book and my foreword should lend it respectability ... and besides the publicity will do you good.'

The present controversy has caused Miss Shanahan some embarrassment, and she hotly denied that the book was being renamed 'Shanahanside Barbs' or 'I Was Political Ghost-Girl.'

It is understood that she was last seen heading for the Windy Gap with a typewriter, looking for inspiration. Meanwhile she has written no Corporation scripts and operation panic-stations has been declared at the Town Hall.

The Mayor has not opened his mouth for a week. 'Just a mild case of political lock-jaw', said the City Manager. A strong telegraph-boy was last seen heading into the hills--with a telegram bearing the plaintive message: 'Come home Babs ... all is forgiven.'

'X X X Paddy.'

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